ALASKA ECONOMIC TRENDS

JOBS PUSH
UNEMPLOYMENT DOWN
IN JULY

October 1992

A PORTRAIT OF OLDER ALASKANS

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

ALASKA ECONOMIC

TRENDS

Contents

Alaska Economic Trends is a monthly publication dealing with a variety of economic-related issues in the state.

Alaska Economic Trends is funded by the Alaska State Employment Service and published by the Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Section, P.O. Box 25501, Juneau, Alaska 99802-5501, Telephone: (907) 465-4500. Telefax: (907) 465-2101.

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This publication, released by the Department of Labor's Employment Security Division and Research and Analysis Section, was produced at a cost of $.93 per copy.

Cover design by Jim Fowler

Printed and distributed by ASETS, a vocational training center and employment program*

A Portrait Of Older Alaskans

by Neal Fried

While the number of older Alaskans is small, their age group is growing fast. In fact, Alaska had one of the fastest growing senior populations in the country. Most are not working for wages; many, however, volunteer their time. Although their incomes are relatively low, few are poor. A majority of them live with a spouse, but many live alone. This article reviews information from the 1990 census and other sources to paint a portrait of Alaska's senior citizens (also referred to here as older Alaskans and 65+).

Older Alaskans fastest growing group

Alaska's population growth of 37% over the past decade ranked second in the nation (Nevada was first). During the same period the state's senior population nearly doubled. (See Table 1.) The senior population in the U.S. as a whole grew 22%. Within this category of older Alaskans, the 80+ group is growing the fastest. By the year 2010 this group is projected to more than triple in size.

No other segment of Alaska's population is growing as quickly as those aged 65+. No one expects this trend will soon change, either. The state demographer estimates the older Alaskan population will more than double by the year 2010. (See Figure 1.)

Why this strong growth? The main explanation for this phenomenon is simple. The number of middle-aged Alaskans (age groups 45-54 and 55-64) grew robustly in the 1980s and they are getting older. Historically many Alaskans began to move south when they reached these ages. This is still happening, but not to the same extent as in the past.

Two other demographic factors might help explain the flourishing senior population. More of today's older Alaskans have children living in Alaska, which acts as an incentive for seniors to remain in the state. Nationally, many seniors are relocating close to their children, so their children can help with their parents' care. This trend should also explain some of the increase in Alaska's senior population.

Another factor which is probably contributing to this change is the $250 monthly stipend, known as the longevity bonus, paid to Alaskans aged 65+. The distribution of the permanent fund dividend may also explain some of this change.

Prior to 1984 only senior citizens who had lived in Alaska before statehood were eligible for the longevity bonus. Then the courts struck down this qualification. All seniors who had lived in the state for at least one year

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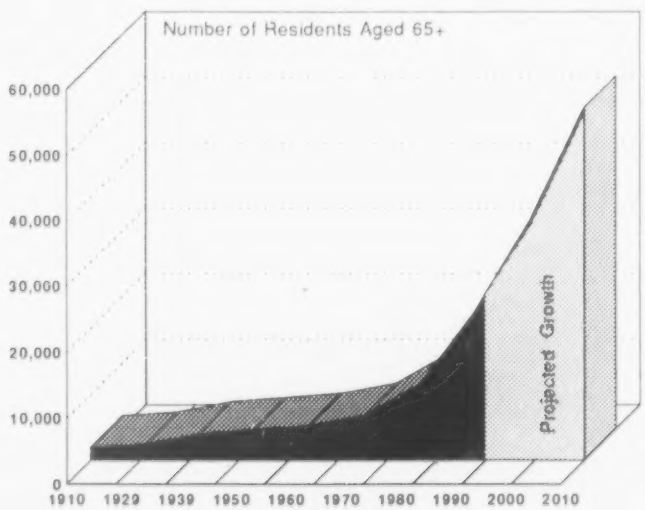
Figure • 1

A Century of Older Alaskans



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census and Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

Table • 1

Number of Alaska's Elderly Grows by Leaps and Bounds

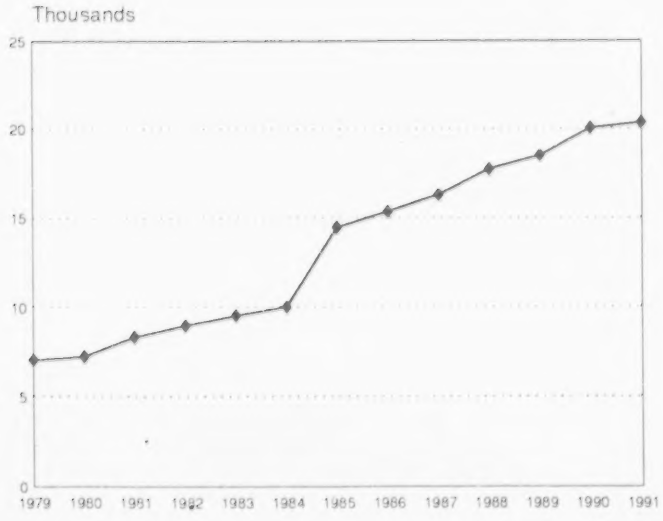
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census & Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

Age Group	1980	1990	% Change 1980-1990	Projected 2010	% Change 1990-2010
65-69	5,206	9,626	84.9	19,238	99.9
70-74	3,106	5,922	90.7	12,629	113.3
75-79	1,845	3,639	97.2	9,562	162.8
80-84	771	1,931	150.5	6,770	250.6
85+	619	1,251	102.1	5,466	336.9
65+	11,547	22,369	93.7	53,665	139.9
All Ages	401,851	550,043	36.9	868,300	57.9

Figure • 2

Recipients of Longevity Bonus

Source: Alaska Department of Administration.



became eligible. As a result, the number of longevity bonus recipients grew dramatically. (See Figure 2.) In addition to the bonus, the first permanent fund dividends were paid in 1982.

In 1991 these two programs combined would have put $3,931 in an older Alaskan's pocket. This goes a long way toward offsetting the higher cost of living in Alaska. There is also evidence the cost of living vis-a-vis the rest of the nation narrowed during the 1980s. From a financial standpoint, these two factors help more senior citizens to remain in Alaska.

Although older Alaskans are the fastest growing population group, proportionately they represent the smallest group of seniors in the country. (See Figure 3.) Only 4.1% of the population in Alaska are 65+ compared to 12.6% nationwide. The frontier characteristics of the state explain the much smaller senior population in Alaska. Alaska attracts many people between the ages of 20-45. They in turn have children which further swells the younger age groups in this state. Even though more older Alaskans are staying in the state, many still leave.

However, since the 65+ population is growing so much faster than the rest of the population, its share is also growing. In 1980 they made up 2.9% of the state's population, compared to

4.1% in 1990. By the year 2000 they are projected to make up 5% of the state's population.

More senior women than men

As a group, older Alaskans are the only age cluster in the state with more women than men. (See Figure 4.) This is, however, a relatively recent development. Prior to 1980 there were more older Alaskan men than women—part of the frontier legacy of the state. In the past more men migrated to Alaska than women. This is why there are proportionately more older Alaskan men than elsewhere in the nation. Nationally only 41% of the senior population are men compared to Alaska's 47%. Because women live longer and because recent migration patterns have become more balanced, women are now outnumbering their male counterparts.

Senior citizens became more urbanized in the past decade

Older Alaskans are distributed throughout the state in the same proportion as the overall population, with 68% living in urban Alaska. This is a significant change from 1980. Then only 57% of seniors were urban residents, compared to 64% for the entire population.

Historically, a disproportionate number of elders lived in rural Alaska. This was because more Alaska Natives lived in rural Alaska and few of these elders migrated out of state. This is still true. In 1990 15.6% of the state's population were Alaska Natives but 18.5% of all older Alaskans in the state were Alaska Natives. During the past decade, however, the number of older Alaskans grew more quickly in urban Alaska because of the very strong in-migration of non-Native migrants. The overall state population also became more urban.

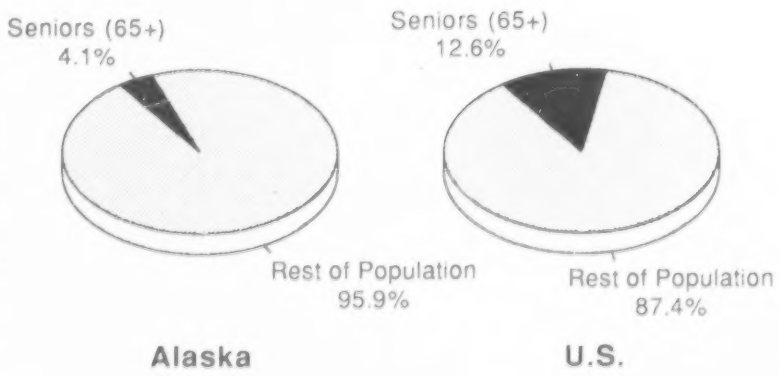
Many rural communities have larger-than-average older Alaskan populations. For example, the population of elders in many villages in the Bethel region exceeds 7%. All of the boroughs and census areas in Southeast Alaska also have above-average populations of elders. (See Table 2.) The reason for this may be that the population in this region tends to be stable and the climate is mild. On the flip side, 65+ population is a much smaller group in the frontier areas of the state. In Dutch Harbor, for example, senior citizens make up less than 1% of the population.

Another urban-rural difference among elders is their ability to speak English. Only 1.4% of the state's population indicated they did not speak English, compared to 6.4% of the state's seniors. The largest concentration of non-English speakers were in Alaska Native communities. In the Bethel and Wade Hampton census areas more than half the older Alaskans did not speak English. This dichotomy will become less prevalent in the future. In these same communities it is not unusual to find 2% or less of younger residents who lack the ability to speak English.

Most seniors live in family households

F i g u r e • 3

Proportion of Seniors Smaller in Alaska



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table • 2

Alaska Senior Population in 1990 by Borough/Census Area

	All Persons 65+		65+ Below Poverty Level	
	65+	Percent of Total Population	Number	Percent of 65+*
ALASKA	22,369	4.1	1,606	7.6
Aleutians East Borough	58	2.4	7	14.6
Aleutians West Census Area	82	0.9	4	5.6
Anchorage, Municipality of	8,258	3.6	382	4.9
Bethel Census Area	657	4.8	175	26.4
Bristol Bay Borough	42	3.0	6	17.1
Dillingham Census Area	205	5.1	51	24.9
Fairbanks North Star Borough	2,540	3.3	204	9.0
Haines Borough	182	8.6	13	7.7
Juneau Borough	1,364	5.1	51	3.9
Kenai Peninsula Borough	2,015	4.9	129	6.6
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	907	6.6	37	4.3
Kodiak Island Borough	425	3.2	50	11.8
Lake and Peninsula Borough	85	5.1	14	15.4
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	1,866	4.7	125	6.9
Nome Census Area	419	5.1	60	15.5
North Slope Borough	197	3.3	27	14.1
Northwest Arctic Borough	281	4.6	42	16.6
Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan CA	216	3.4	24	11.5
Sitka Borough	492	5.7	—	—
Skagway-Yakutat-Angoon Census Area	235	5.4	17	7.2
Southeast Fairbanks Census Area	223	3.8	22	9.8
Valdez-Cordova Census Area	463	4.7	29	6.5
Wade Hampton Census Area	258	4.5	47	18.2
Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area	507	7.2	12	2.5
Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area	392	4.6	78	21.4

*The percent of those 65+ whose poverty status could be determined.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

A majority of older Alaskans live in family households. (See Figure 5.) In most cases this means they live with their spouse. However, 27% of all seniors live alone compared to 8% for the entire population. More striking is the fact that a third of all women live alone compared to only a fifth of the men. This is because women live longer. Nearly 5% of all older Alaskans live in what the census bureau terms "group quarters"—Pioneer Homes, nursing care facilities, etc.

A majority of Alaska's elders live in their own homes. Renting is the second most popular housing option for older Alaskans. For those seniors who own their own home a smaller percentage of their income goes to homeowner costs (including mortgages). This is not surprising since their homes are often paid for or they have older mortgages with smaller payments. Those seniors who rent, however, pay a bigger slice of their income for rent than the overall population does. This is because rent payments, unlike mortgages, are much more likely to reflect current (higher) housing costs.

Older Alaskans are more likely to lack full plumbing facilities in their homes than the overall population—9.5% compared to 7.1%. This means they may lack any one or more of the following: hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower. A lack of full plumbing facilities is particularly prevalent in rural Alaska. For example, 70% of the elders in the Wade Hampton census area lacked complete plumbing facilities.

Few older Alaskans are active in the job market

Participation in the labor force begins to fall off steeply between the ages of 55-64; by age 65 working becomes the exception rather than the rule. (See Figure 6.) The number of senior citizens active in the labor market has fallen steadily over the years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics only 16% of older Alaskans were active in the labor market in 1991. In 1980 20% were active; in 1970 the proportion was 28%.

There are many reasons why the retirement age keeps sinking. Some are: better pension plans, higher social security payments, and the increased popularity of early retirement incentive plans. These changes have all made it possible for a growing number of seniors to become financially secure at a younger age.

There are other reasons why seniors' representation in the world of work falls off so quickly. Polls indicate that

many retired older Americans would like to work. Some need to work to supplement their retirement, others are bored with retirement and some want to work for social reasons. However, a number of barriers exist. Social Security regulations may discourage older people from working because benefits are often reduced. If a recipient is younger than 65 and earns more than $6,480 a year, or is between the ages of 65-70 and earns more than $8,800, their benefits are lowered. There are no reductions for workers over 70.

Also, some retirements are not voluntary. Workers may retire because they lose their job or they risk losing their job before "normal" retirement age. There are older Alaskans who would like to work part-time or phase in their retirement, but institutional rules often don't allow for this. There is also a dearth of well-paying part-time jobs. Age discrimination acts as another important barrier.

It should be pointed out that these labor force participation statistics underestimate senior citizen involvement in the working world. Many spend a significant amount of time doing volunteer work, taking care of family members, and/or involved in subsistence activity.

Some researchers believe the trend of earlier retirement may soon end. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is already projecting a small rise in the labor force participation rate of men 55 to 64. With people living longer and remaining healthy longer it would logically follow that a person's work life would be extended. Employers may create more flexible working arrangements so they can keep their older workers, who are often among their most highly- skilled and experienced workers. In the future there may be fewer of the institutional rules that now discourage older people from working. Age discrimination may also lessen.

Others believe that economic factors will reverse the present trend. Fewer workers in the current labor force are covered by private pension plans, which will make it more difficult for workers to retire early. These researchers believe that as people live longer and their numbers continue to grow it will become more difficult to support the system that is in place today. In a sense the Social Security system is already taking this into account. Beginning in the year 2000, the age when beneficiaries become eligible for full retirement benefits will gradually increase from 65 to 67.

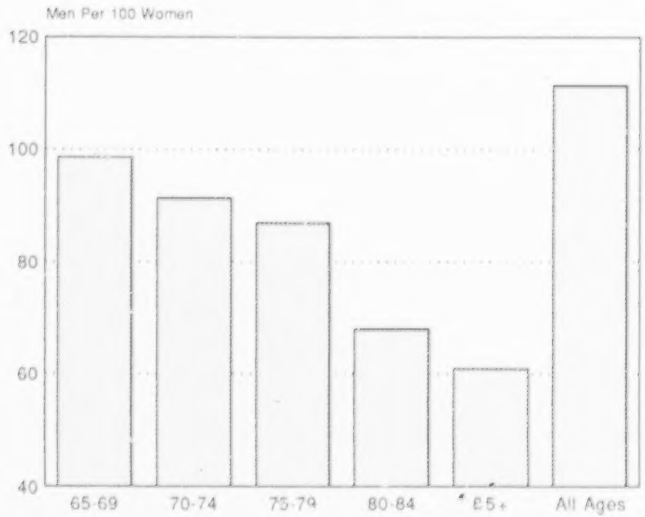
Income falls fast for senior citizens

The low participation rate of senior citizens in the labor force is reflected in their income picture. For all age groups in Alaska the median household income was $41,408 in 1989. This means half of Alaska's households had incomes of less than $41,408 and half earned more. The census bureau has not yet published median wage income by age. Instead, they have published the distribution of household income by age.

Although these figures make income comparison more difficult, the conclusion from this information is clear. (See Table 3.) Of all older Alaskan households, 67% had incomes of less than $35,000 compared to 42% for all

Figure • 4

Older Alaska Women Outnumber Older Alaska Men



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

ages. Only 15% of the state's residents had household incomes of less than $15,000 compared to 33% for the 65+ group. On the higher end, only 19% of the senior households had incomes over $50,000 compared to 40% of the overall population. Their lower incomes are understandable. A majority of them are not working, and wages make up nearly three-quarters of all income in the state. Their household size is also smaller. And even seniors who are still working earn wages significantly below average. (See Figure 7.)

Although seniors have lower incomes, this doesn't necessarily mean their spending power is less than the rest of the population. More often, they own their own homes and have no debts. Their household sizes are smaller, so their discretionary income per capita is often higher. Other benefits such as Medicare, senior citizen property tax exemption and other rebate programs help offset smaller incomes.

Another factor which boosts the spending power of seniors is that on average they have accumulated a much greater net worth than the rest of the population. As a group they have had more time to accumulate wealth. Also, most of their working lives took place during one of the most prosperous eras in this nation. Nationally the net worth of seniors was nearly twice the average for the overall population. There are no net worth figures for Alaska.

Knowledge of senior spending power has not been lost on many communities in the nation. These communities actively court retirees in order to diversify, stabilize or revitalize their economies. In some cases the senior citizen spending power—referred to as the "mailbox economy" because their social security and other retirement income arrives in the mail—is a town's biggest source of income.

Percent of poor seniors plummets

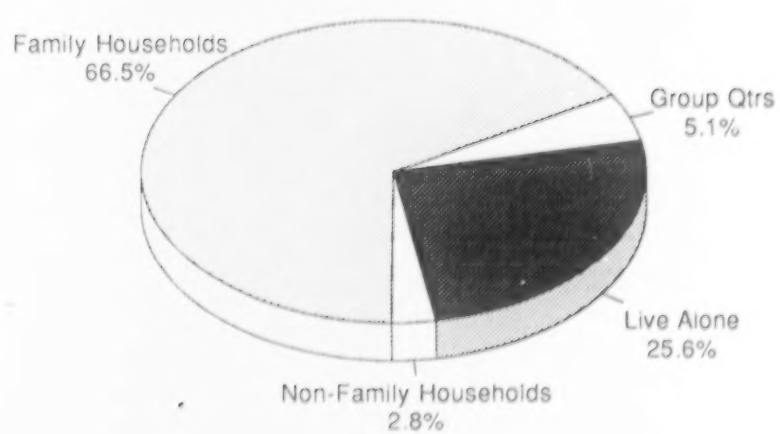
The percent of older Alaskans falling below the poverty line was nearly cut in half over the past decade. In 1980 14% of all seniors fell below the poverty line compared to 7.6% percent in 1990. Besides the dramatic growth in the number of seniors, this may represent the biggest change that has taken place over the past decade. In 1980 a higher percentage of seniors fell below the poverty level than the overall population. The reverse was true in 1990 when 9% of the state's overall population fell below the poverty line.

Why such a dramatic shift? Part of the answer is the longevity bonus and permanent fund dividend programs. In 1989, the year for which the census measured income, an eligible elder received $3,873 from these two programs; a couple received $7,746. This income supplement to social security and other retirement income goes a long way to pushing nearly all senior citizens above the relatively low poverty income thresholds. In 1989 the poverty threshold for a senior was $5, 947; for a two-person family it was $7,501. Higher social security benefits and other retirement income may have also contributed to an improved economic picture in Alaska for seniors.

Figure • 5

Where do Older Alaskans Live?

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.



Older Alaskans are in better shape financially than their counterparts elsewhere. Nationally, 12.8% of seniors fell below the poverty line, which was nearly identical to the rest of the population. The higher cost of living in Alaska, though, is not reflected in these numbers.

Although senior citizens in nearly all geographic areas of the state benefitted from these declines in the incidence of poverty, large segments of the 65+ population are still living below these thresholds in some areas. This is particularly true in rural Alaska. (See Table 2.) For example, the proportion is higher than 20% in the Bethel, Dillingham and Yukon-Koyukuk census areas. These figures do not take the rural higher cost of living into account, although subsistence activity may partially offset this.

In spite of this dramatic improvement in the poverty picture, the number of seniors in Alaska receiving public assistance grew by 53% during the past decade. Because the senior population grew faster than this, the proportion of them receiving old age assistance actually dropped.

Summary: Older Alaskans are a dynamic group

Older Alaskans are the fastest-growing age group in the state and among the fastest-growing in the nation. In spite of this strong growth, Alaska is still home to the smallest proportion of seniors than any other state. In spite of their diminutive size, they continue to increase their share of the state's population, and this trend is expected to continue.

Not only are their numbers changing fast but so are their characteristics. For example, the 1990 census was the first one that counted more senior women than men. This is a sign that migration to the state is becoming less male-dominated. Most elders live in family households and a sizeable number live alone.

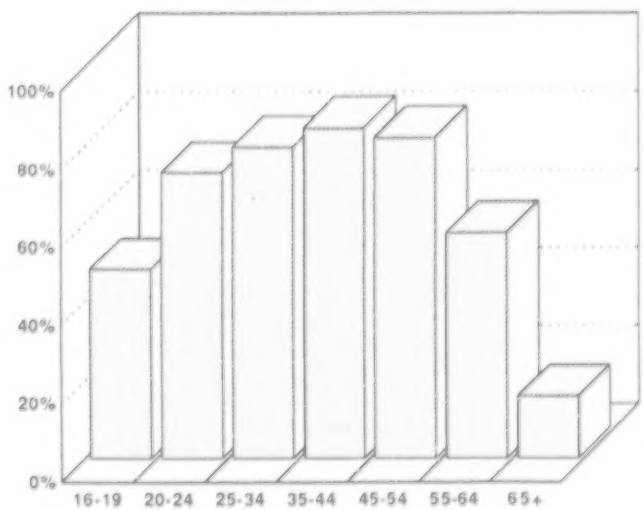
Fewer senior citizens were active in the Alaska job market than ever before in history. Many elders choose not to work. There are others who would like to work but don't because of barriers such as discrimination. Some researchers believe the decline in seniors' participation in the work place may end. Reasons given include longer and healthier lives; financial constraints might force this change to happen.

As seniors retire their income falls. It would be a mistake, however, to measure their well-being by income alone. Unlike most other age groups, senior citizens have had time to accumulate financial assets. Therefore, their spending power in a community is often far greater than their income would indicate.

One of the most striking changes in the past decade is the steep decline in the incidence of poverty among older Alaskans. The longevity bonus and permanent fund dividend payments may be important factors in cutting their frequency of poverty.

Figure 6

Labor Force Participation Falls Off Dramatically With Age



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table • 3

Household Income of Alaskans by Age in 1989 (Percent Distribution)

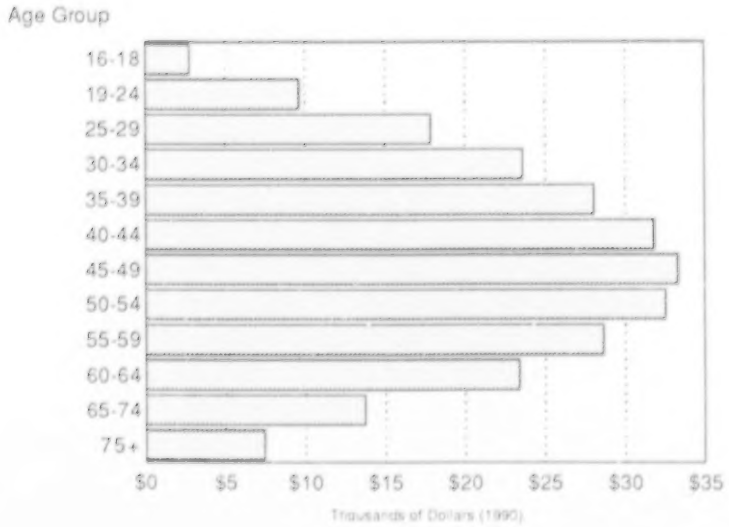
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

	Less Than $5,000	$5,000-$9,999	$10,000-$14,999	$15,000-$24,999	$25,000-$34,999	$35,000-$49,999	$50,000-$74,999	$75,000 $99,999	$100,000
15 to 24	6.3	9.3	15.6	27.3	17.6	13.8	7.0	1.7	1.4
25 to 34	3.3	4.2	6.6	16.7	18.0	21.3	19.7	6.7	3.6
35 to 44	2.7	3.2	3.8	9.1	11.9	20.4	26.0	14.1	8.7
45 to 54	2.9	3.1	3.5	7.4	8.4	15.2	26.8	17.5	15.3
55 to 64	3.9	5.5	6.2	11.2	12.4	17.2	20.4	12.7	10.6
65 to 74	4.6	10.6	12.7	19.1	15.3	15.6	12.0	5.4	4.7
75+	7.8	18.0	18.4	21.3	12.3	10.3	6.9	3.0	2.1
65+	5.5	12.7	14.4	19.7	14.4	14.1	10.6	4.7	4.0
All Ages (15+)	3.5	4.8	6.4	13.3	13.6	18.5	21.3	10.9	7.7

Figure • 7

Annual Average Wage Drops for Older Alaskans

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.



1990 Census *Bulletin*

Estimates of the Resident Total Population of States by Age: July 1, 1991*

	Resident Population	Under 5 Years	5 to 17 Years	18 to 24 Years	25 to 44 Years	45 to 64 Years	65 Years & Over	Median Age
United States	252,177	19,222	45,923	26,385	82,149	46,744	31,754	33.1
Alabama	4,089	295	776	447	1,254	788	529	33.3
Alaska	**570**	**57**	**123**	**56**	**222**	**88**	**24**	**29.8**
Arizona	3,750	310	700	390	1,195	659	497	32.5
Arkansas	2,372	170	456	241	694	458	353	34.1
California	30,380	2,651	5,512	3,312	10,539	5,179	3,187	31.5
Colorado	3,377	258	625	338	1,209	606	340	32.9
Connecticut	3,291	237	527	327	1,097	651	451	34.7
Delaware	680	51	117	75	224	130	83	33.2
District of Columbia	598	43	78	76	214	110	77	33.4
Florida	13,277	915	2,083	1,202	4,036	2,609	2,432	36.5
Georgia	6,623	523	1,252	736	2,246	1,198	668	31.8
Hawaii	1,135	89	199	120	388	209	129	32.9
Idaho	1,039	82	236	103	311	181	124	31.8
Illinois	11,543	887	2,111	1,193	3,754	2,151	1,448	33.1
Indiana	5,610	406	1,059	609	1,765	1,063	708	33.2
Iowa	2,795	193	532	283	833	523	431	34.3
Kansas	2,495	190	482	252	781	443	346	33.1
Kentucky	3,713	256	703	401	1,172	710	472	33.3
Louisiana	4,252	339	894	465	1,331	748	474	31.3
Maine	1,235	86	224	12[illegible]	401	234	166	34.3
Maryland	4,860	377	824	487	1,708	935	530	33.3
Massachuetts	5,996	431	943	669	2,023	1,106	824	33.8
Michigan	9,368	717	1,767	994	3,012	1,748	1,130	32.9
Minnesota	4,432	338	851	433	1,470	784	555	32.8
Mississippi	2,592	202	549	299	757	463	323	31.4
Missouri	5,158	378	962	511	1,601	980	726	33.8
Montana	808	59	165	72	252	152	108	34.3
Nebraska	1,593	120	315	156	491	285	225	33.3
Nevada	1,284	101	220	121	447	256	138	33.4
New Hampshire	1,105	85	195	112	385	200	128	33.3
New Jersey	7,760	565	1,277	747	2,571	1,559	1,041	34.7
New Mexico	1,548	130	328	154	494	273	168	31.5
New York	18,058	1,340	3,026	1,884	5,909	3,542	2,357	34.0
North Carolina	6,737	485	1,158	776	2,190	1,302	826	33.4
North Dakota	635	46	127	67	193	109	92	32.8
Ohio	10,939	796	2,023	1,129	3,458	2,100	1,432	33.7
Oklahoma	3,175	230	615	326	973	601	430	33.4
Oregon	2,922	209	539	273	954	546	401	34.8
Pennsylvania	11,961	816	2,014	1,211	3,701	2,362	1,858	35.3
Rhode Island	1,004	70	160	116	323	184	152	34.2
South Carolina	3,560	270	668	411	1,143	660	407	32.3
South Dakota	703	54	146	69	208	123	104	32.9
Tennessee	4,953	346	884	530	1,588	975	629	33.9
Texas	17,349	1,457	3,512	1,888	5,776	2,960	1,756	31.0
Utah	1,770	174	468	208	515	249	155	26.3
Vermont	567	42	103	63	188	103	67	33.4
Virginia	6,286	461	1,078	704	2,172	1,189	682	32.9
Washington	5,018	383	932	489	1,715	910	590	33.4
West Virginia	1,801	106	331	187	538	367	271	35.7
Wisconsin	4,955	362	949	505	1,576	902	661	33.2
Wyoming	460	34	102	44	151	81	49	32.4

**Note: In Thousands. Includes Armed Forces Residing in State.*
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Jobs Push Unemployment Down in July

by Holly Stinson

Alaska's unemployment rate took a plunge in July, dropping 1-1/2 percentage points to 7.8%. This follows three months of stagnant or rising rates. (See Figure 1.) Does July's improvement in the unemployment arena signal a turnaround in a weak economy? Not exactly. While the number of unemployed dropped from June, there are 6,500 more unemployed Alaskans than in July 1991, when the unemployment rate stood at 7.0%. (See Table 4.)

What it does mean is that many of Alaska's industries are adding their usual seasonal workers. Statewide 6,400 jobs were added from June to July this year. (See Table 1.) Over-the-year comparisons, however, point out how anemic the economy has become. There are an estimated 1,000 additional jobs in the entire state compared to July 1991, which translates into a growth rate very close to zero.

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Most industries registering little or no growth

A glance at where the job growth is warns that even this small growth will likely not be sustained for long. The basic industries of mining, construction and manufacturing are enjoying seasonal job increases but all have fewer jobs this July than last year. The service industries—transportation, trade, services and finance—are registering some job growth, but very little (less than 2%). The one sector keeping the economy's head above water is government. As revenues decline, there will likely be more belt-tightening at both the state and local level.

Although federal, state and local employment is above last July's count, both state and local jobs decreased from June to July. Across the state, layoffs at local school districts during the summer outweigh the additional summer jobs with local governments, which causes a net employment loss in this sector. This is not the case in Alaska's largest city, however, where seasonal jobs with the municipal government more than make up for the temporary summer losses at the school district. This accounted for a net gain of 300 jobs from June in Anchorage's local government sector.

News reports detailed the jobs lost with state government at the beginning of a new fiscal year July 1. Fire crews normally on the state payroll in July have been mostly idle this year as Alaska experiences a quiet fire season. The lucky ones are earning a paycheck fighting fires in the Lower 48. So why is the employment count for state government above last year's level? The answer is that

Figure • 1

Unemployment Rates Finally Take A Seasonal Drop

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

the University of Alaska is reporting several hundred additional employees, which masks the drop in other state employment. Without including the University, state jobs are down 5% from last July. The bulge in University employment is most noticeable in Fairbanks, where state employment would be virtually identical to 1991 without the university jobs.

New retailers boost Fairbanks jobs; more new stores on horizon

The other noticeable bulge in Fairbanks' job count is the 500 additional jobs in retail trade, explained mostly by the new stores which opened in the last year. The new full-service Fred Meyer store accounts for many of these new jobs.

Fred Meyer announced plans to open another full-service store on the Kenai Peninsula. The new store, located in Soldotna, will replace the existing small one in Kenai and create 250 retail jobs when it opens in late 1993. K-Mart also plans to build a new store in Kenai by November 1993, adding another 200 retail jobs on the Peninsula.

In Anchorage, the already considerable list of new stores scheduled to open in the next several months grew by one in July. Sears announced plans to expand its Anchorage store, creating 40-50 new jobs in the retail sector. While the list of new retail stores expanding or opening soon in

Table • 1

Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment by Place of Work — Alaska & Municipality of Anchorage

Alaska

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from 6/92	Changes from 7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	262,000	255,600	261,000	6,400	1,000
Goods-producing	50,000	43,500	53,100	6,500	-3,100
Mining	10,900	10,700	12,400	200	-1,500
Construction	13,100	12,200	13,100	900	0
Manufacturing	26,000	20,600	27,600	5,400	-1,600
Durable Goods	3,300	3,400	4,100	-100	-800
Lumber & Wood Products	2,400	2,400	3,200	0	-800
Nondurable Goods	22,700	17,200	23,500	5,500	-800
Seafood Processing	19,000	13,500	19,500	5,500	-500
Pulp Mills	900	900	900	0	0
Service-producing	212,000	212,100	207,900	-100	4,100
Transportation	24,200	23,900	23,900	300	300
Trucking & Warehousing	3,300	3,100	3,200	200	100
Water Transportation	1,900	1,900	1,900	0	0
Air Transportation	7,600	7,500	7,700	100	-100
Communications	3,700	3,600	3,600	100	100
Trade	50,500	49,800	49,800	700	700
Wholesale Trade	8,200	8,100	8,200	100	0
Retail Trade	42,300	41,700	41,600	600	700
Gen. Merch. & Apparel	6,700	6,700	6,300	0	400
Food Stores	7,800	7,500	7,300	300	500
Eating & Drinking Places	14,900	14,600	14,900	300	0
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	11,100	11,100	11,000	0	100
Services & Misc.	55,800	55,200	55,000	600	800
Hotels & Lodging Places	7,500	6,900	7,400	600	100
Health Services	11,400	11,500	11,200	-100	200
Government	70,400	72,100	68,200	-1,700	2,200
Federal	20,300	20,200	19,700	100	600
State	20,900	21,100	20,600	-200	300
Local	29,200	30,800	27,900	-1,600	1,300

Municipality of Anchorage

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	6/92	7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	116,800	115,500	117,400	1,300	-600
Goods-producing	13,200	12,400	14,300	800	-1,100
Mining	3,400	3,300	4,000	100	-600
Construction	7,000	6,600	7,100	400	-100
Manufacturing	2,800	2,500	3,200	300	-400
Service-producing	103,600	103,100	103,100	500	500
Transportation	12,900	12,700	12,900	200	0
Communications	2,200	2,200	2,200	0	0
Trade	26,300	26,000	26,700	300	-400
Wholesale Trade	5,700	5,800	5,800	-100	-100
Retail Trade	20,600	20,200	20,900	400	-300
Food Stores	3,500	3,300	3,300	200	200
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	6,800	6,800	6,800	0	0
Services & Misc.	29,600	30,000	29,500	-400	100
Hotels & Lodging Places	2,700	2,700	2,700	0	0
Health Services	5,900	6,000	5,900	-100	0
Government	28,000	27,600	27,200	400	800
Federal	11,200	11,100	10,800	100	400
State	7,500	7,500	7,400	0	100
Local	9,300	9,000	9,000	300	300

Notes: Prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Government includes teachers in primary and secondary schools, and personnel employed by the University of Alaska.

The employment numbers that appear here are definitionally different from those that appear in the Labor Force table.

Benchmark: March 1991
p/ denotes preliminary estimates
r/ denotes revised estimates

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

Table • 2

Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment By Place of Work

Southeast Region

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	Changes from: 7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	37,100	35,850	37,000	1,250	100
Goods-producing	8,200	6,800	8,400	1,400	-200
Mining	350	350	350	0	0
Construction	1,500	1,350	1,450	150	50
Manufacturing	6,350	5,100	6,600	1,250	-250
Durable Goods	2,150	2,100	2,600	50	-450
Lumber & Woods Products	2,050	2,000	2,500	50	-450
Nondurable Goods	4,200	3,000	4,000	1,200	200
Seafood Processing	3,100	1,850	2,850	1,250	250
Pulp Mills	900	900	900	0	0
Service-producing	28,900	29,050	28,600	-150	300
Transportation	2,950	2,950	3,050	0	-100
Trade	6,450	6,250	6,150	200	300
Wholesale Trade	600	600	600	0	0
Retail Trade	5,850	5,650	5,550	200	300
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	1,200	1,150	1,250	50	-50
Services & Misc.	6,350	6,250	6,200	100	150
Government	11,950	12,450	11,950	-500	0
Federal	2,350	2,350	2,250	0	100
State	5,300	5,550	5,550	-250	-250
Local	4,300	4,550	4,150	-250	150

Fairbanks North Star Borough

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	Changes from: 7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	30,700	29,900	28,750	800	1,950
Goods-producing	2,800	2,550	2,800	250	0
Mining	300	250	250	50	50
Construction	1,800	1,650	1,850	150	-50
Manufacturing	700	650	700	50	0
Service-producing	27,900	27,350	25,950	550	1,950
Transportation	2,300	2,250	2,200	50	100
Trucking & Warehousing	600	550	550	50	50
Air Transportation	500	500	500	0	0
Communication	300	300	350	0	-50
Trade	7,400	7,350	6,900	50	500
Wholesale Trade	800	800	800	0	0
Retail Trade	6,600	6,550	6,100	50	500
Gen. Merch. & Apparel	1,050	1,050	600	0	450
Food Stores	850	800	850	50	0
Eating & Drinking Places	2,750	2,750	2,800	0	-50
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	1,100	1,050	1,100	50	0
Services & Misc.	6,750	6,550	6,600	200	150
Government	10,350	10,150	9,150	200	1,200
Federal	3,450	3,400	3,350	50	100
State	4,350	4,100	3,300	250	1,050
Local	2,550	2,650	2,500	-100	50

Anchorage-MatSu Region

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	Changes from: 7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	124,300	123,700	125,100	600	-800
Goods-producing	13,950	13,250	15,100	700	-1,150
Mining	3,550	3,500	4,200	50	-650
Construction	7,500	7,100	7,550	400	-50
Manufacturing	2,900	2,650	3,350	250	-450
Service-producing	110,350	110,450	110,000	-100	350
Transportation	13,600	13,450	13,600	150	0
Trade	28,200	28,000	28,850	200	-650
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	7,100	7,100	7,100	0	0
Service & Misc.	31,300	31,700	31,200	-400	100
Government	30,150	30,200	29,250	-50	900
Federal	11,300	11,250	10,850	50	450
State	8,300	8,350	8,250	-50	50
Local	10,550	10,600	10,150	-50	400

Interior Region

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	Changes from: 7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	35,200	34,350	33,500	850	1,700
Goods-producing	3,150	2,900	3,050	250	100
Mining	500	450	450	50	50
Construction	1,900	1,750	1,900	150	0
Manufacturing	750	700	700	50	50
Service-producing	32,050	31,450	30,450	600	1,600
Transportation	2,600	2,550	2,650	50	-50
Trade	7,900	7,850	7,350	50	550
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	1,150	1,150	1,150	0	0
Services & Misc.	7,700	7,250	7,500	450	200
Government	12,700	12,650	11,800	50	900
Federal	4,200	4,150	4,150	50	50
State	4,700	4,500	3,950	200	750
Local	3,800	4,000	3,700	-200	100

Table • 2

Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment By Place of Work

Northern Region

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	14,500	14,600	15,450	-100	-950
Goods-producing	5,750	5,700	6,900	50	-1,150
Mining	5,100	5,150	6,300	-50	-1,200
Service-producing	8,750	8,900	8,550	-150	200
Government	4,050	4,300	4,100	-250	-50
Federal	250	250	300	0	-50
State	350	350	400	0	-50
Local	3,450	3,700	3,400	-250	50

Gulf Coast Region

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	29,450	27,350	30,300	2,100	-850
Goods-producing	10,500	8,150	11,350	2,350	-850
Mining	1,150	1,150	1,250	0	-100
Construction	1,200	1,200	1,250	0	-50
Manufacturing	8,150	5,800	8,850	2,350	-700
Seafood Processing	7,200	4,900	7,750	2,300	-550
Service-producing	18,950	19,200	18,950	-250	0
Transportation	2,250	2,250	2,300	0	-50
Trade	5,000	4,900	4,900	100	100
Wholesale Trade	650	550	650	100	0
Retail Trade	4,350	4,350	4,250	0	100
Finance-Ins. & Real Estate	650	650	600	0	50
Services & Misc.	5,400	5,250	5,350	150	50
Government	5,650	6,150	5,800	-500	-150
Federal	650	650	650	0	0
State	1,700	1,800	1,900	-100	-200
Local	3,300	3,700	3,250	-400	50

Southwest Region

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	7/91
Total Nonag. Wage & Salary	19,550	18,400	19,700	1,150	-150
Goods-producing	8,300	6,550	8,550	1,750	-250
Seafood Processing	7,800	6,200	8,100	1,600	-300
Service-producing	11,250	11,850	11,150	-600	100
Government	5,650	6,100	5,650	-450	0
Federal	1,450	1,450	1,400	0	50
State	550	550	650	0	-100
Local	3,650	4,100	3,600	-450	50

Municipality of Anchorage — Other

	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	Changes from: 6/92	7/91
Durable Goods	700	600	700	100	0
Nondurable Goods	2,200	2,000	2,600	200	-400
Trucking & Warehousing	2,000	1,900	2,000	100	0
Water Transportation	300	300	300	0	0
Air Transportation	4,700	4,700	4,700	0	0
Gen. Merch. & Apparel	3,100	3,100	3,300	0	-200
Eating & Drinking Places	7,700	7,700	7,800	0	-100

Notes: Prepared in part with funding from the Alaska State Employment Security Division.
Government includes teachers in primary and secondary schools, and personnel employed by the University of Alaska.

The employment numbers that appear here are definitionally different from those that appear in the Labor Force table.

Benchmark: March 1991
p/ denotes preliminary estimates
r/ denotes revised estimates

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

Anchorage grows, current retail employment continues to fall below 1991 levels.

For now, these new retail ventures are impacting construction employment. The only other large private sector project in the Anchorage area this summer is at Girdwood. By the end of August the new hotel and tramway being built at Alyeska Resort accounted for about 150 construction jobs. Even with these projects, construction jobs reported in Anchorage were fewer this summer than last.

Anchorage posts second month of over-the-year job losses

With very few exceptions, the public sector is the only area of growth in Anchorage. Across the board industries are employing fewer this July than last. In July Anchorage posted a negative growth rate for the second month. Losses in the oil and gas sector, along with the Anchorage Times closure, account for 1,000 fewer jobs this July. Preliminary reports indicate that tourism, at least in Anchorage, is not growing above 1991 levels. While this doesn't mean any job losses compared to last summer, a flat tourist season means this industry is not providing any impetus in the economy. Hotel room receipts in Anchorage were up 4.2% for the second quarter of 1992 but this only takes us through June. Later reports indicate a flat season at best. The Alaska Railroad is reporting ridership counts similar to last year.

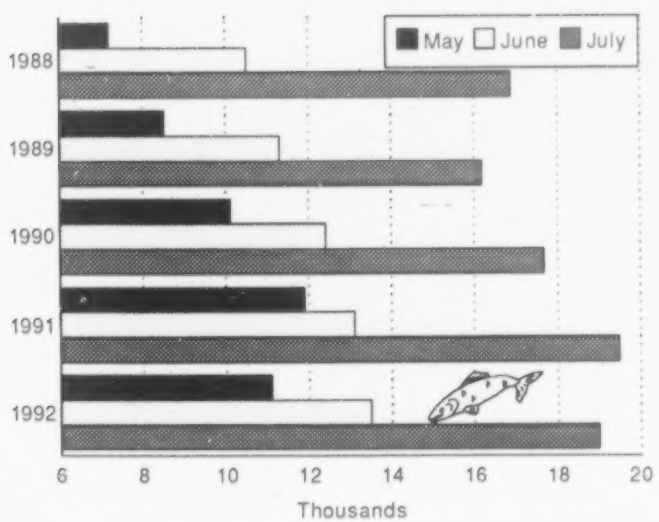
Accounts from other areas of the state paint a better picture. The 50th anniversary celebration of the Alaska Highway is responsible for considerable increases in people entering the state over the road. In Fairbanks, the tax on hotel rooms for the April, May and June period was up 29% from the same months in 1991. Other tourism indicators were also up---bookings on the Alaska Marine Highway were up 8% over 1991 and hotel occupancy rates in Juneau were running higher than last year.

Anchorage was not alone in employment patterns in July. Every region enjoyed seasonal gains from June, but Fairbanks was the only area to post considerable job gains compared to July 1991. (See Table 2.) In the Northern region the culprit was the loss of jobs in the oil industry. A weak government sector did nothing to offset the oil losses. In the Gulf and Southwest regions fewer seafood jobs, again along with a weak government sector, pulled the job count to the negative side.

In Southeast, state employment is down 4.5% from July 1991, and there are 400 fewer logging jobs. Small gains in seafood processing, trade and services, however, were enough to allow Southeast to remain on the positive side of the job growth ledger. The only area of the state to have a considerably lower unemployment rate this July was also in Southeast. Haines saw an improvement of almost 8 percentage points in their unemployment rate. This was because last year's sawmill closure made their unemployment rate skyrocket. By now, those former mill workers have either found other work or left the Haines labor force.

Figure • 2

Seasonal Increase in Seafood Jobs Lessens



Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

Seafood employment down; salmon harvest varies around state

One summer job generator, the seafood processing industry, had less of a seasonal increase this July. (See Figure 2.) One reason is the boost in bottomfish processing in keeping employment levels higher in spring months. But total July jobs in seafood processing fell below last July.

Preliminary data from Alaska Department of Fish & Game indicate there are 11 million fewer salmon (of all species) caught through the first week of August this year compared to the 1991 salmon season. This is down 12.7% from

Table • 3

Alaska Hours and Earnings for Selected Industries

	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91
Mining	$1,190.44	$1,111.50	$1,202.47	50.7	48.9	52.1	$23.48	$22.73	$23.08
Construction	1,181.42	1,120.69	1,127.28	47.2	46.1	46.2	25.03	24.31	24.40
Manufacturing	469.48	511.79	517.16	48.4	45.9	49.3	9.70	11.15	10.49
Seafood Processing	417.07	423.64	459.72	51.3	47.6	52.6	8.13	8.90	8.74
Trans., Comm. & Utilities	650.38	637.60	655.45	36.6	35.8	35.7	17.77	17.81	18.36
Trade	355.04	346.21	355.55	33.4	32.6	32.5	10.63	10.62	10.94
Wholesale	551.17	551.86	589.25	37.7	38.7	39.6	14.62	14.26	14.88
Retail	317.52	306.15	311.38	32.6	31.4	31.2	9.74	9.75	9.98
Finance-Ins. & R.E.	428.39	433.31	405.26	34.8	35.2	33.8	12.31	12.31	11.99

Notes:
p/ denotes preliminary estimates
r/ denotes revised estimates
Benchmark: March 1991

Averages are based on data for full- and part-time production workers (manufacturing) and nonsupervisory workers (nonmanufacturing) and are for gross earnings and hours paid, including overtime pay and hours.

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

the 1991 season. While fewer fish have been caught, the total pounds harvested so far is higher than last year. With prices running higher than last year, the value of this year's catch should exceed 1991's. The story of the 1992 salmon season differs, however, from region to region.

Southeast Alaska is enjoying a good pink salmon run. Throughout the Gulf Coast—from Prince William Sound to Cook Inlet to Kodiak—the pink salmon harvest is running only 1/3 of that forecast. Fears of a repeat of last year—when a late run of pinks in Prince William Sound overwhelmed processing capacity—turned into more of a disaster when the pinks simply didn't show in expected quantities. Employment estimates for July show Gulf Coast with 550 fewer seafood processing jobs compared to July 1991; Southwest was down 300 while Southeast posted gains of 250.

The sockeye (red) salmon harvest is almost the opposite of the pink story. Statewide the sockeye harvest will likely surpass the previous record catch of 52.8 million set in 1983. Upper Cook Inlet had their second best sockeye catch ever, while Lower Cook Inlet had their third poor salmon season in a row. In Kodiak the sockeye harvest may be greater than the pink harvest for the first time.

The salmon harvest in Bristol Bay is running well above last year in terms of both number of fish and pounds caught. Processors in Dillingham quit processing the low-priced pink salmon, however, because of a flat city tax of 1.5 cents per processed fish. The tax is a much smaller proportion of total value when processing the higher-priced sockeye. Fortunately, sockeye is the main species of the Bristol Bay salmon harvest.

Farther north, a late break up in Norton Sound cancelled the herring harvest there earlier this season. This caused the federal Small Business Administration to declare the region an economic disaster area in July, allowing fishermen to obtain emergency federal loans. A recent crab opening was disappointing, and a poor chum salmon run added more hardship to an area already hard-hit economically by this fishing season.

Summary: Unemployment takes seasonal drop but economy has little employment growth

After three months of stagnant unemployment rates, July's plunged 1-1/2 percentage points to 7.8%. Although many industries added seasonal workers, over-the-year comparisons point to an anemic economy statewide.

Anchorage registered negative growth rates for the second month in a row. Losses in the oil and gas industry and manufacturing (impacted by the Anchorage Times newspaper closure) along with a reportedly flat tourist season were the main culprits.

The employment picture in Anchorage—seasonal increases but poor comparisons to last July—was echoed in every region except Fairbanks. The seafood processing industry had less of a seasonal increase this July, and employment was below last July's level. The overall salmon harvest was running above last year's in terms of total pounds (but not in number of fish caught) through the first week of August.

Table • 4

Labor Force By Region and Census Area

	Labor Force			Unemployment			Rate %			Employment		
	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91	p/ 7/92	r/ 6/92	7/91
Alaska Statewide	274,857	271,199	268,351	21,426	25,102	18,799	7.8	9.3	7.0	253,431	246,097	249,552
Anch.-MatSu Region	138,048	137,811	134,818	10,583	11,830	8,825	7.7	8.6	6.5	127,465	125,981	125,993
Munic. of Anchorage	121,495	120,212	118,653	8,279	9,095	6,976	6.8	7.6	5.9	113,216	111,117	111,677
MatSu Borough	16,553	17,599	16,165	2,304	2,735	1,849	13.9	15.5	11.4	14,249	14,864	14,316
Gulf Coast Region	35,663	33,827	35,648	2,973	3,658	2,509	8.3	10.8	7.0	32,690	30,169	33,139
Kenai Peninsula Borough	22,289	21,277	22,255	2,259	2,792	1,950	10.1	13.1	8.8	20,030	18,485	20,305
Kodiak Island Borough	7,962	7,426	7,985	330	382	248	4.1	5.1	3.1	7,632	7,044	7,737
Valdez-Cordova	5,412	5,124	5,408	384	484	311	7.1	9.4	5.8	5,028	4,640	5,097
Interior Region	38,950	38,574	36,444	3,564	4,389	3,340	9.2	11.4	9.2	35,386	34,185	33,104
Fairbanks North Star Bor.	33,682	33,267	31,559	3,000	3,626	2,855	8.9	10.9	9.0	30,682	29,641	28,704
Southeast Fairbanks	2,199	2,183	2,032	238	289	198	10.8	13.2	9.7	1,961	1,894	1,834
Yukon-Koyukuk	3,069	3,124	2,853	326	474	287	10.6	15.2	10.1	2,743	2,650	2,566
Northern Region	8,115	8,470	8,306	911	1,146	862	11.2	13.5	10.4	7,204	7,324	7,444
Nome	3,005	3,172	3,115	370	493	392	12.3	15.5	12.6	2,635	2,679	2,723
North Slope Borough	2,861	2,947	2,938	136	177	122	4.8	6.0	4.2	2,725	2,770	2,816
Northwest Arctic Borough	2,249	2,351	2,253	405	476	348	18.0	20.2	15.4	1,844	1,875	1,905
Southeast Region	38,564	37,465	37,917	2,532	2,962	2,508	6.6	7.9	6.6	36,032	34,503	35,409
Haines Borough	951	933	1,021	94	113	179	9.9	12.1	17.5	857	820	842
Juneau Borough	17,363	16,669	16,871	1,068	1,066	858	6.2	6.4	5.1	16,295	15,603	16,013
Ketchikan Gateway Bor.	7,155	7,022	7,118	478	628	556	6.7	8.9	7.8	6,677	6,394	6,562
Pr. of Wales-Outer Ketch.	2,910	2,935	2,938	253	390	327	8.7	13.3	11.1	2,657	2,545	2,611
Sitka Borough	4,479	4,314	4,395	235	250	224	5.2	5.8	5.1	4,244	4,064	4,171
Skagway-Yakutat-Angoon	1,850	1,830	1,789	191	241	159	10.3	13.2	8.9	1,659	1,589	1,630
Wrangell-Petersburg	3,856	3,762	3,785	213	274	205	5.5	7.3	5.4	3,643	3,488	3,580
Southwest Region	15,517	15,052	15,218	863	1,117	755	5.6	7.4	5.0	14,654	13,935	14,463
Aleutians East Borough	1,095	1,056	1,082	22	36	23	2.0	3.4	2.1	1,073	1,020	1,059
Aleutians West	3,077	2,927	3,006	72	69	40	2.3	2.4	1.3	3,005	2,858	2,966
Bethel	6,004	5,825	5,874	450	543	392	7.5	9.3	6.7	5,554	5,282	5,482
Bristol Bay Borough	585	567	573	18	28	14	3.1	4.9	2.4	567	539	559
Dillingham	2,776	2,727	2,714	122	204	95	4.4	7.5	3.5	2,654	2,523	2,619
Wade Hampton	1,980	1,950	1,969	179	237	191	9.0	12.2	9.7	1,801	1,713	1,778

Notes: p/ denotes preliminary estimates r/ denotes revised estimates Benchmark: March 1991

- *Federal guidelines require the use of unrounded labor force data, adjusted to be consistent with the Current Population Survey in formulas used to allocate federal funds.*
- *Comparisons between different time periods are not as meaningful as other time series published by the Alaska Department of Labor.*
- *The official definition of unemployment currently in place excludes anyone who has made no attempt to find work in the four-week period up to and including the week that includes the 12th of each month. Most Alaska economists believe that Alaska's rural localities have proportionately more of these discouraged workers.*
- *The employment numbers that appear above are definitionally different from those that appear in the Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Employment tables.*

Source: Alaska Department of Labor, Research & Analysis Section.

Alaska Employment Service

Anchorage: Phone 269-4800

Bethel: Phone 543-2210

Dillingham: Phone 842-5579

Eagle River: Phone 694-6904/07

Mat-Su: Phone 376-2407/08

Fairbanks: Phone 451-2871

Glennallen: Phone 822-3350

Kotzebue: Phone 442-3280

Nome: Phone 443-2626/2460

Tok: Phone 883-5629

Valdez: Phone 835-4910

Kenai: Phone 283-4304/4377/4319

Homer: Phone 235-7791

Kodiak: Phone 486-3105

Seward: Phone 224-5276

Juneau: Phone 790-4562

Petersburg: Phone 772-3791

Sitka: Phone 747-3347/3423/6921

Ketchikan: Phone 225-3181/82/83

The mission of the Employment Security Division is to promote employment and economic stability by responding to the needs of employers and job seekers.

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